

LEAD TESTING IN SCHOOLS TRAINING WORKSHOP “TELLING”



TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WATER SUPPLY DIVISION

STEPS TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A 3Ts PROGRAM



Training

Testing

Telling

Learn about lead issues in drinking water, review this and other related guidance, and determine what has already been done at the school

Develop a program plan: establish partnerships, assign roles, establish routine practices, create a recordkeeping policy, and begin recording pertinent information

Establish a general communications strategy and keep the public and partners informed of relevant actions and updates

Prepare to sample: create a plumbing profile and sampling plan, and become familiar with sampling protocol and procedures

Conduct sampling: then record and interpret results

Share results with the public

TELLING



- Notify relevant parent, student, and employee organizations of results.
- Identify activities school is pursuing to correct the lead issues.
- Keep copies of results in administrative offices in case someone wants to review them.

PUBLIC NOTICE TYPES



- There are several basic public notification methods to communicate lead in drinking water issues and results.
 - Post in public areas around school buildings
 - Presentations
 - Email and web sites
- Also:
 - Press Release (example in 3Ts)
 - Letters/Fliers Mailbox or Paycheck Stuffers
 - Staff Newsletter
 - Examples of these are found in 3Ts document

PUBLIC NOTICE TYPES



- Post sampling information on common area bulletin boards such as lunch rooms and employee lounges
- Press Release
 - Local newspaper press release informing a broad range of the public about lead in drinking water issues and the results of the sampling program.
- Letters/fliers
 - Letters or fliers represent the most direct and effective method of communicating lead in drinking water activities to the community, including direct mail to parents/guardians and other members of the school or building community.

PUBLIC NOTICE TYPES



- Mailbox or Paycheck Stuffers
 - Mailbox or paycheck stuffers represent the most direct and effective method of communicating lead in drinking water activities to school employees.
- Staff Newsletter
 - Notice contain in a staff newsletter is another option for direct and effective communication to employees.

PUBLIC NOTICE TYPES



- Presentations
 - Providing presentations at facility-related meetings is another effective means of communication. Presentations could be given to audiences such as parent-teacher organizations, faculty, and at school board meetings.
- Email and Web sites
 - Electronic communications are convenient for many parents and websites can be updated frequently to quickly convey new information.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



- The Components of an Effective General Communication Strategy
- The purpose of a general communication strategy is to provide the means for addressing questions from members of your facility's community and also to provide ongoing, up-to-date information regarding your sampling efforts.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



- *Ideally, designate a single spokesperson or special task force to interact with the public since it is important that your message remain consistent.*
- The issues to be addressed as part of a communication strategy include:
 - Participants
 - Timing for delivery
 - Content of the message
 - Methods and manner of communication
 - Recordkeeping

PARTICIPANTS



- *There are six primary players involved in the control of lead in drinking water.*
 1. School Community: employees, students, and parents should be informed and involved in the process. Interested employees, students, and parent volunteers can help address the issue and ensure safe drinking water.
 2. Building Community: users of the facility who would be most affected by lead in drinking water problems such as students, teachers, other employees, school boards, and community groups who use the facility.

PARTICIPANTS



3. Local Health Community: local health officials such as health officers, sanitarians, and nurses can help you understand potential health risks associated with elevated lead levels in drinking water.
4. Larger Community: local and regional media can serve as a conduit for information to reach a larger local community. Be prepared to generate accurate news releases. Your spokesperson or task force should be prepared to respond to interview requests with accurate information.

PARTICIPANTS



5. Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and EPA Regions: TCEQ and EPA are responsible for ensuring that public water suppliers comply with the state and federal regulations regarding lead in drinking water.
6. Drinking Water Community: the regulated drinking water community includes public water suppliers who are responsible for complying with all national and state drinking water standards for lead. They ensure the water they deliver is controlled for corrosion, with minimal amounts of lead.

TIMING



- The timing of your communication activities is very important.
- Whenever public health risks are involved, public communication efforts are less complicated and generate less conflict if those potentially affected are notified in advance of important issues and events.

TIMING



- At a minimum, provide information to members of the local school community and the larger community (if deemed necessary) at the following three times:
 - Before your lead in drinking water sampling program begins.
 - In response to periodic interest.
 - After you obtain the results of testing: when/if you decide upon corrective measures or if no corrective measures are required because the lead levels are low.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION CONTENT



- Public Notification Contents
 - Details about the nature of the drinking water lead control program.
 - Results of sampling program and any corrective action plans.
 - Information on public health efforts and risks posed by lead in drinking water and the significance of lead in drinking water versus other sources such as food, air, dust, and soil.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION CONTENT



- Public Notification Contents
 - Availability of general lead in drinking water information resources and detailed sampling results.
 - How and where individuals may seek blood-lead level testing if they are concerned.
 - Recommend consultation with a physician if further assistance is needed.
 - How families can increase their awareness of exposure in their home and elsewhere.

COMMUNICATION METHODS



- Additional Ideas for Methods of Communication
 - Create an information center located at a convenient place in the facility, such as a library or breakroom.
 - Create a task force with representatives from the community.
 - Make a list of accredited laboratories available to test home water for lead and other contaminants.

COMMUNICATION METHODS



- Effective Communication Tools
 - Provide information with honesty, accuracy, and in a comprehensive manner.
 - Always speak with one voice – designate a point person to respond to parents and media.
 - Anticipate likely questions and be prepared.
 - Be positive, proactive, and forthcoming when working with the media.
 - Keep members of community updated regularly.

RECORDKEEPING



- Maintain an ongoing record of public outreach and communication activities
 - Enables complete transparency.
 - Provides documentation that steps were taken to inform the public on lead issues.
 - Keep copies of all test results, spreadsheets, and communication between yourself and the laboratory.
 - Keep copies of the Public Notice and a list of people who received it.

COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES



- The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) provides schools with a “Lead Testing in Schools” information website:
 - https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/chemicals/lead_copper/lead-testing-in-schools-outreach-project
- Sample Public Notice Materials are available in the 3 Ts document:
 - Sample Letter to Parents
 - Sample Press Release
 - Sample Newsletter Article

WRAP UP

- Use the Sampling Plan.
- Use the Plumbing Profile.
- Use the Inventory template.
- Document and keep good records.
- Learn to read the results. (located in 3Ts document under laboratory analysis)
- Communicate results to the public.
- Remediate when high results are found.

QUESTIONS

